

APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT
IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

FOR:
**FLIP SEAT ARRANGEMENT
HAVING UPPER SEAT BACK PIVOT**

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to United States Provisional Application No. 60/398,221 filed July 24, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention generally relates to movable seat assembly arrangements in a passenger cab of an automotive vehicle. More specifically, the invention pertains to a rotatable rear seat assembly of the passenger cabin of a vehicle having an external cargo bed, such as a pick-up truck.

[0003] Vehicles having external cargo beds yet expanded passenger cabins have become increasingly popular. For example, pick-up trucks with rear seating assemblies and access doors therefor are now commonplace. Such expanded passenger cabs are obtained at the expense, oftentimes, of a shorter length of the exterior cargo bed.

[0004] There is a need in the pick-up truck art for a rear seat assembly which is convertible to provide additional storage space between a front seat assembly and a rear wall of the truck's passenger cabin. Additionally, there is a need for extending a portion of the volume of the truck's exterior cargo bed into a rear area of the passenger cabin to enable objects of lengths longer than the cargo bed to be carried without extending rearwardly outside of the cargo bed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] In a first aspect of the invention, a flexible auxiliary storage arrangement for the passenger cabin of a vehicle having a cargo bed extending rearwardly from the passenger cabin includes a rear seat system positioned adjacent the rear wall of the passenger cabin and a rear seat cushion having a first hinge assembly at a forward portion of its bottom side and a rear seat back having a second hinge assembly proximate its top edge. The first hinge assembly is operative to enable the rear seat cushion to rotate forwardly to a substantially vertical position with a rear end of the rear seat cushion facing a roof of the cabin. The second hinge assembly is operative to enable the rear seat back to rotate forwardly to a substantially horizontal position with a rear surface of the rear seat back resting upon the rear end of the rear seat cushion.

[0006] In another aspect of the invention, a flexible auxiliary storage arrangement for a vehicle having a passenger cabin and a cargo bed extending rearwardly from a rear wall of the passenger cabin includes an opening in the rear wall of the passenger cabin and in communication with an opening in the front wall of the cargo bed, whereby a length of the cargo bed is extended into a rear portion of the passenger cabin.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0007] The objects and features of the invention will become apparent from a reading of a detailed description, taken in conjunction with the drawing, in which:

[0008] Figure 1 is a side view of a rear seat assembly of the invention in the rest or seating position;

[0009] Figure 2 is a side view of the rear seat arrangement of Fig. 1 with the rear seat cushion partially rotated forwardly;

[0010] Figure 3 is a perspective view of a storage compartment located beneath the rear seat cushion;

[0011] Figure 4 shows the rear seat cushion rotated to a vertical position and attached to a netting assembly for use with a bed feature of the invention;

[0012] Figure 5 shows the rear seat back partially rotated forwardly from its rest position;

[0013] Figure 6 shows the rear seat back in a first intermediate position allowing access to a bag assembly and to storage areas underneath the rear seat cushion;

[0014] Figure 7 is a view of the bag assembly partially moved forward from a stowed or rest position;

[0015] Figure 8 shows the bag assembly in a fully extended deployed position;

[0016] Figure 9 shows the rear seat back in a second deployed position substantially parallel to the floor of the passenger cabin;

[0017] Figure 10 shows the seat back deployed and the box assembly deployed and the seat back being used as a bed;

[0018] Figure 11 shows the bag assembly in its closed or stowed position;

[0019] Figure 12 shows a zipper opening in the bag assembly for access to a cargo bed door actuator;

[0020] Figure 13 shows a locating pin for the bag assembly in the front face portion of the bag assembly which mates with a locking hole in a floor of the passenger cabin;

[0021] Figure 14 shows a view of the rear seat back hinge assembly;

[0022] Figure 15 shows the locating pin in an underside of the rear seat back and a receiving hole therefor in a rear end of the rear seat cushion;

[0023] Figure 16 shows a view from the cargo bed of the vehicle featuring a bag access door in a front wall of the cargo bed;

[0024] Figure 17 is a view of Fig. 16 with the access door in a partially lowered position; and

[0025] Figure 18 shows an access door on the cargo bed fully opened and the bag assembly deployed to hold an object larger in length than the length of the exterior cargo bed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0026] With reference to Fig. 1, a passenger cabin 102 of an extended cabin pick-up truck has its rear door opened to reveal the back side of a first front seating assembly 106 and a rear seating assembly 108 positioned in a rear seating area 104 of passenger cabin 102.

[0027] Rear seating assembly 108 includes a rear seat cushion 116 having a front end 116c and a bottom side 116b. A rear end 116a of rear seat cushion 116 is forward of and abuts rear seat back 114. Additionally, rear seat assembly 108 includes a plurality of seatbelt buckles 100 and mating seatbelt tongues 112 positioned conventionally at ends of the two halves of the seatbelt for a number of passengers, for example, three.

[0028] Fig. 2 shows rear seat cushion 116 partially rotated forwardly in the direction of arrow 200 about a pivot axis 202 located beneath rear seat cushion 116 and extending adjacent a forward edge of a rear seat base 204. With this movement, rear seat cushion 116 has its front end 116c entering downwardly into the space between the front seat assembly 106 and the rear seat base 204 so as to face floor 206 of passenger cabin 102.

[0029] In Fig. 3, rear seat cushion 116 has been rotated forwardly to a vertical position exposing part of rear seat cushion hinge assembly at hinge 304a coupled between a bottom surface of rear seat cushion 116 and rear seat base 204. Also exposed in this view is a storage compartment 300 covered by a hinged access door 302a located in the rear seat base 204 beneath rear seat cushion 116 in its rest or seating position

[0030] Fig. 4 is another view of the rear seating compartment showing seat cushion 116 rotated fully forwardly to its vertical position about hinge elements 304a and 304b. In this position, access is enabled to hinged storage access doors 302a and 302b for first and second storage compartments located beneath rear seat cushion 116.

[0031] Additionally shown in Fig. 4 is a occupant containment net 400 fashioned of conventional seatbelt webbing material in a cross pattern as shown. Net 400 is anchored at its top to built-in receptacles 404 in a passenger cabin roof side rail. At its bottom, net 400 is furnished with a plurality of seatbelt buckle/tongue elements 402 which couple to seatbelt elements of the rear seating arrangement 108 which are anchored at their distal ends to rear frame cross member 408 of rear seat cushion 116. Hence, alternate units 402 will have either a seatbelt buckle or a seatbelt tongue attached to an end of the net with the opposite members attached to an end of the seatbelt assembly portions of seat cushion 116. Net 400 is used in conjunction with a bed arrangement of the invention which will become apparent in a later section of this description.

[0032] With reference to Figs. 5 and 15, rear seat back 114 is shown in the beginning stages of its forward rotation in the direction of arrow 502 about a hinge assembly proximate a top end of seat back 114 (not shown in this view). Rear seat cushion 116 is rotated to its vertical position with its rear end 116a facing a roof of passenger cabin 102. A rear surface of rear seat back 114 carries at least one locating pin 500 for mating engagement with a receptacle 502 (Fig. 15) located in rear end 116a of rear seat cushion 116.

[0033] In Fig. 6 rear seat back 114 has been rotated to a first intermediate position allowing access to a bag assembly located behind rear seat back 114, which will be discussed in detail below. Also shown in Fig. 6 is an axis of rotation 202 which substantially extends between hinges 304a and 304b for rear seat cushion 116.

[0034] Fig. 7 is another view of rear seat back 114 in its first intermediate position and showing a bag assembly 700 partially moved away from its rest or stowage position in a mating opening 704 in a rear wall of passenger cabin 102. Bag assembly 700 includes a rigid end panel 702 which covers the rear wall opening in the stowed position.

[0035] In Fig. 8, bag assembly 700 has been fully extended in its deployed position. Bag assembly 700 includes, as mentioned above, a rigid front wall 702 and side walls 702a and 702b fashioned from a flexible material, such as cloth. Metal reinforcing rods 802 maintain the side walls in their vertical extension. Bag assembly 700 is open at a rear end thereof about the opening 704 of rear wall 800 of the passenger cabin.

[0036] Fig. 9 shows rear seat back 114 in a second fully deployed position wherein the seat back surface is substantially parallel to the passenger cabin floor and ceiling with a rear surface 114a of rear seat back 114 facing the cabin floor. In this fully deployed state, rotated rear seat cushion 116 and rear seat back 114 define a substantially rectanguloid storage volume beneath rotated rear seat back 114 and between rotated rear seat cushion 116 and a rear wall of passenger cabin 102.

[0037] In Fig. 10, fully deployed rotated rear seat elements 116 and 114 are shown with bag assembly 700 fully deployed beneath rotated rear seat back 114. Additionally, as seen from Fig. 10, the substantially horizontal rear seat back 114 in its rotated position may be used as a bed surface. In this adaptation of seat back 114, the occupant containment net 400 of Fig. 4 would additionally be used to prevent an occupant reclining on surface 114 from rolling forward into the front seating area of the passenger cabin.

[0038] Fig. 11 shows the bag assembly in its closed or stowed position with rigid end panel 702 flush with interior rear wall of passenger cabin 102 so as to cover opening 704 therein.

[0039] Fig. 12 is another view of a partially deployed bag assembly 700 showing a zippered opening 1200 in the bag assembly 700 for enabling access to a cargo bed door actuator and closer 1202. Thus, the cargo bed door, to be described below, is maneuverable from inside passenger cabin 102. Alternatively, zipper halves 1204a and 1204b could define the opening 1202 in an upper surface of bag assembly 700. Additionally, alternative means of sealing the opening, such as with adhesive material could replace zipper halves 1204a and 1204b.

[0040] Fig. 13 shows fully deployed bag assembly 700 with at least one bag assembly locating pin 1300 extending from beneath rigid end panel 702 for mating engagement with a locking hole 1302 formed in an upper facing surface of rear seat base 204.

[0041] Fig. 14 shows rear seat back 114 in its fully rotated position to reveal a double link hinge 1400 which defines rear seat back pivot axis 1402.

[0042] Fig. 16 is a view from the rear of pick-up truck 200 along cargo bed or pick-up box 1600 and showing a bag access door 1602 in a front wall of the cargo bed. A lower edge 1606 of door 1602 has hinges 1604a,b and c for enabling door 1602 to swing downwardly about its lower edge 1606 for receipt by a recessed area 1608 in floor 1610 of the cargo bed or pick-up box 1600.

[0043] Fig. 17 is a view similar to Fig. 16 showing door 1602 in a partially lowered position and revealing opening 1700 in a front wall of the cargo bed pick-up box. Opening 1700 is in mating communication with opening 704 in the rear wall of passenger cabin 102 and further in communication with the interior of deployed bag assembly 700.

[0044] Fig. 18 shows bag access door 1602 in a fully downward position revealing the entirety of opening 1700 and the interior of bag assembly 700. In this state, the cargo bed 1600 is effectively partially extended into the interior of passenger cabin 102 via the interior of bag assembly 700. Hence, an object such as a piece of lumber or drywall 1800 may be entirely contained within the bed even though its length is longer than the exterior length of the bed. For example, with this arrangement, a four foot by eight foot piece of plywood may be held entirely within a four foot by six foot pick-up box while two feet extends into bag assembly 700.

[0045] To summarize the aspects of the exemplary seating and cargo bed arrangement described above, and with reference to all the drawing Figures,

a bottom edge of a rear seat back 114 extends behind a rear edge 116a of rear seat cushion 116 to maximize the overall height of the seat back 114.

[0046] The rear seat cushion 116 is hinged toward the front edge 116c, thereby allowing it to tumble forward to a vertical position. Positive stops are incorporated into hinges 304a,b that prevent rear seat cushion 116 from traveling beyond the vertical position.

[0047] The rear seat back 114 is hinged at top outboard corners thereof with double-link hinges 1400. An upper cross member of the seat back frame ties both hinges together to synchronize their movement. This allows bag 114 to first be rotated upwards to a substantially horizontal position and then lowered vertically until at least one pin 500, located on an underside of seat back 114 at its front edge, lines up and drops into an adjacent receptacle 502 located on rear edge 116a of the tumbled rear seat cushion 116. The seat back hinges 1400 and an anti-sway bracket, both attached to a rear structure of the passenger cabin, support a rear edge of the back cushion 114 to create an elevated horizontal surface that can be utilized as a bed.

[0048] Pass-through openings are added to both a front wall of the pick-up box and a rear wall of the passenger cabin. A bag assembly 700 is used to extend the length of cargo box 1600 and consists of a hard (e.g., plastic) end panel 702 with cloth sides 702a,b, and metal reinforcing rods 802 on outboard sides of the bag assembly. The bag 700 seals off a pass through opening 704 thus maintaining the interior environment of the passenger cabin. When the cargo bed extension bag 700 is pulled forward into the passenger cabin 102,

metal rods 802 support the cloth sides 702a and feet 1300 on a bottom edge of end panel 702 lock the deployed bag into place.

[0049] The mating pass-through opening in the front wall of the pick-up box has a drop-down door 1602 to close off the opening when the pick-up box extension is not being utilized. The zippered opening 1200 on a surface of the bag assembly provides access to a release latch 1202 on drop-down door 1602. A recessed depression 1608 in the floor 1610 of pick-up box 1600 allows door 1602 to fall flush with floor 1608 so as not to interfere with items being loaded into the pick-up box extension.

[0050] The invention has been described with reference to an example disclosure. The scope and spirit of the invention are to be derived from the properly interpreted claims appended hereto.